

VZCZCXRO7666
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #2804/01 3401119
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 061119Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5505
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 002804

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [EAID](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: Malakal Update: Fragile Calm Returning

Ref: a) Khartoum 02772, b) Khartoum 02765

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Malakal is returning to a fragile calm, with the possibility of violence still looming. The ceasefire is holding as of December 5, civilians are returning to the town, and humanitarian organizations are being encouraged to resume operations. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) have deployed to pre-clash locations, and the GoSS and the GNU are engaged in post-incident discussions, with President Kiir visiting Malakal on December 4. However, the underlying causes of the conflict have not been addressed as unaligned, SAF-supported Southern Sudan Defense Force (SSDF) militias remain in Malakal. Both the SPLA and the SSDF are reportedly massing troops in the area and more violence in greater Upper Nile region is likely. Hardliners in the SPLM believe that attacks by the SSDF constitute violations of the CPA because the SSDF is still receiving SAF support. These hardliners also believe the attacks are an organized NCP attempt to destabilize their region and are demanding that Kiir do more to respond. End Summary.

Ceasefire Holds; Root Causes Still in Place

¶2. (SBU) The ceasefire in Malakal is holding following the November 27 outbreak of violence between militias aligned with the SAF and SPLA (reftels), although there are continuing reports of sporadic gunfire. Shops are reopening, barge traffic is resuming, and people are moving freely around town. There are no reports of any targeted attacks against Northerners. The local government has called for calm on the radio and urged people to return, which many are doing. The joint patrols comprised of SPLA, SAF, national police, UN police, and UNMIL Observers are helping restore order. A buffer zone exists between the SAF and SPLA, with UNMIS presence in this zone and at the airport.

¶3. (SBU) The situation remains tense, however, as the underlying causes of the violence have not been addressed. The presence of the SAF-supported, but nominally unaligned SSDF and the absence of a political solution to the dispute over the Commissioner of Fankak position continue to threaten the town. Local SSDF commander Gabriel Tang (aka Gabriel Gatwech Chan or Tanganya), who holds the rank of Major General in the SAF and has demanded to be appointed Commissioner of Fangak, was flown to Khartoum by the UN at the beginning of the crisis to help defuse the situation. However, the ongoing presence in the area of both Tang's deputy, Thomas Mabor, and the SPLM's designated Commissioner of Fangak, John Maluit, fueled the subsequent violence and continue to create tension.

¶4. (SBU) The representative of UN OCHA in Malakal is appealing to international organizations to return to the town to help restore normality and to address the urgent humanitarian crises, including disposal of decaying corpses that are contaminating the Nile River, and access to safe drinking water. The estimated number of dead has exceeded 150 and the number injured close to 400. The ICRC has delivered a total of 27 bodies from SAF controlled areas to SPLA areas. Following the extensive looting, the OCHA is also concerned

about growing numbers of vulnerable people in the town.

All Sides Investigating the Matter

15. (SBU) The GOSS and Government of National Unity (GNU) are both investigating the causes of the fighting. Khartoum reportedly sent the Minister in the Office of the President, Idris Mohammed Abdel Kader, to Juba to discuss the situation over the weekend of December 12. Although the press said that GoSS Vice President Riek Machar was sent to Malakal, Machar explained he did not go because the GoSS wanted to first send military commanders to address the situation on the ground. ConGen contacts have asserted that some SPLM/A members opposed dispatching Machar, a powerful Nuer leader who founded the militias that became the SSDF. They say that Machar and former SSDF leader Lt. Gen. Paulino Matip, now SPLA Deputy Commander-in-Chief, may have been involved in the original attack and should be distanced from any resolution of the situation.

SPLM Growing Impatient As Calls for Action Grow

16. (SBU) The Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) presence in Malakal has been described as useless by a senior GoSS official, and it appears to be playing no active role in restoring security or public confidence. The SPLA has dispatched Deputy Director of Operations Piang, who was joined by the Deputy Commander of the JIUs in Southern Sudan, Major General Thomas Cirillo, to Malakal. (Note: Chief of Staff Oyai Deng Ajak is visiting South Africa. End note.) Hardliners in the SPLA, including Deng and others, reportedly were not dispatched to Malakal by Kiir, who is concerned about escalating the military response. ConGen contacts report concerns among SPLA/M

KHARTOUM 00002804 002 OF 002

members that Kiir is not taking a hard enough position to rid the South of the militia problem.

17. (SBU) There is widespread belief among Southerners that the National Congress Party (NCP) is behind the Malakal violence. GoSS President Salva Kiir, SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum and GoSS Vice President Machar have all publicly asserted that the NCP must take responsibility for any tribal militias that it trained, armed, and financed. They believe these groups continue to follow an NCP agenda to destabilize the South. The SAF has only admitted to providing non-lethal aid, such as food and clothing, to the groups it supported during the war, a move it says is necessary to maintain calm until a proper disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process can take place.

HUME